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(54)

Method and apparatus for controlling the shape and position of a deformable object

(57) A method and apparatus for controlling the shape and position of a deformable object are described. At least a portion of an object is heated to a temperature sufficient to render the heated portion deformable by a force. An image profile of the heated portion of the object is obtained. A controller compares the image profile to a reference profile and produces an error image signal. Based on the error image signal, an instruction signal is generated. A force applicator responsive to the instruction signal applies a radial force to at least one distinct predetermined location on the heated portion of the object in response to the instruction signal to cause the heated portion of the object to conform to the reference profile. The invention is particularly useful in controlling the shape of an optical fiber preform.

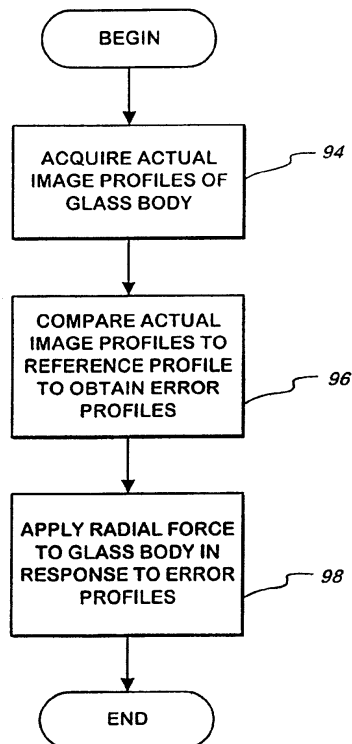


FIG. 5



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EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

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EP 99 40 2358

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**ANNEX TO THE EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT
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